

## **PART 15**

### **Landscaping and Screening**

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#### **SECTION 1501. PURPOSE**

These landscaping requirements are intended to foster aesthetically pleasing development that will preserve and enhance the appearance, character, health, safety, and welfare of the community. These regulations are intended to further the compatibility of adjacent uses and, in doing so, minimize the harmful impact of noise, dust and other debris, motor vehicle headlight glare or other artificial light intrusions, and other objectionable activities or impacts conducted or created by adjoining or nearby uses.

#### **SECTION 1502. APPLICATION**

Any application for a building permit for other than a single- or two-family dwelling, and related accessory structures, shall include a landscaping plan, as described herein, approved by the Township. No building permit shall be issued without Township approval of such landscaping plan.

#### **SECTION 1503. LANDSCAPING PLAN CONTENT**

**A.** Landscaping plans shall include provisions for the following types of landscaping, as applicable:

1. Parking Lot Landscaping
  - a. Perimeter Parking Lot Landscaping
  - b. Interior Parking Lot Landscaping
2. Landscaping Buffers for Incompatible Uses

**B.** All landscaping plans shall contain the following information, unless specifically waived by the Township:

1. The location and dimensions of all existing and proposed structures, property lines, easements, parking lots and drives, roadways and rights-of-way, sidewalks, bicycle paths, ground signs, refuse disposal and recycling areas, fences, freestanding electrical equipment, recreational areas, and other freestanding structural features as deemed necessary by the Township.
2. The location of existing buildings, structures, and plant materials on adjacent property within twenty (20) feet of the site, unless waived by the Township.

3. The location, quantity, size, and name, both common and botanical, of all existing plant materials, including trees and other material in any road right-of-way, and indicating plant material to be retained and removed.
4. The location, quantity, size, and name, both common and botanical, of all proposed plant material, including, but not limited to, shade trees, shrubs, groundcover, annuals/perennials, and turf.
5. Existing and proposed grading of the site, indicating contours at five (5) foot intervals. The Township may require contours at two (2) foot intervals .
6. Elevations of all fences and retaining walls proposed for location on the site.
7. Elevations, cross-sections, and other details as determined necessary by the Township.
8. Summary data indicating the total area and percentage of the site comprising the landscaping area.

## **SECTION 1504. DESIGN STANDARDS**

### **A. Selection**

Landscaping materials shall conform to the following:

#### **1. Shade Trees**

All shade trees proposed to be used in accordance with any landscaping plan shall be a minimum of eight (8) feet in height and have a minimum trunk diameter, twelve (12) inches above the ground, of two and one-half (2½) inches upon planting. They shall be of a variety that will attain an average mature spread greater than twenty (20) feet.

#### **2. Shrubs**

All shrubs shall have a minimum height of twenty-four (24) inches at planting and a maximum height of four (4) feet at maturity for decorative purposes and a height of six (6) to eight (8) feet at maturity for screening purposes. Shrubs used to form hedges shall be of a non-deciduous species and shall be spaced not more than three (3) feet apart so as to form a visual screen attaining a minimum of thirty-six (36) inches in height above grade, under normal growing conditions, within one (1) year after planting.

### **B. Installation**

1. All landscaping material shall be installed in accordance with the current planting procedures established by the American Association of Nurserymen.
2. All landscaping required by the approved landscaping plan shall be installed prior to the issuance of an Occupancy Permit unless approval for postponement is granted by the Zoning Officer for weather related reasons. Where installation must be postponed until the next year's planting season, or for other weather related reasons, a surety bond must be posted with the Township in an amount equal to one hundred percent (100%) of the estimated installation costs, as determined or accepted by the Township.

### C. Maintenance

The owner of the premises shall be responsible for the maintenance, repair, and replacement of all landscaping materials in accordance with the standards set by this Chapter and as indicated on the landscaping plan approved by the Township. All landscaping materials shall be maintained on a continuing basis, in a healthy condition. If any planting material dies or is otherwise removed for any reason, it shall be the responsibility of the property owner to replace the material immediately. Fences, walls, and other barriers shall be maintained in good repair.

### D. General Guidelines

#### 1. Plant Materials

Planting materials used in conformance with this Section shall be of a species normally grown in western Pennsylvania and capable of withstanding the extremes of individual site microclimates. Plant material shall be selected for interest in its structure, texture, color, and ultimate growth. A variety of compatible species should be included in the planting plan for a specific site or development. The use of drought-tolerant plant material is preferred. The use of salt-tolerant plant material is preferred for planting areas adjacent to rights-of-way. Domestic turf grasses should be used in areas with little or no slope to prevent the runoff of irrigation water. Evergreens shall be incorporated in those landscaping areas where screening and buffering is required, as described by Sections 1506 and 1507, below.

#### 2. Scale and Nature of Plant Material

The scale and nature of landscaping materials shall be appropriate to the size of proposed structures. Large scaled buildings, for example, should generally be complemented by larger scaled plantings. Additionally, plant materials should be placed intermittently against long expanses of building walls, fences, and other barriers to create a softening effect.

#### 3. Preservation of Existing Plant Material

Significant existing plant material should be incorporated into the landscape treatment of a site. To this end, every development, with the exception of individual single-family dwellings in unplatted subdivisions, shall retain all existing trees eighteen (18) inches or more in diameter unless the retention of such trees would unreasonably burden the development. No excavation or other subsurface disturbance may be undertaken within the drip line of any tree eighteen (18) inches or more in diameter, and no impervious surface may be located within 12½ feet (measured from the center of the trunk) of any tree eighteen (18) inches or more in diameter unless compliance with this subsection would unreasonably burden the development. For purposes of this subsection, a drip line is defined as a perimeter formed by the points farthest away from the trunk of a tree where precipitation falling from the branches of that tree lands on the ground. A claim of an “unreasonable burden” shall be presented to the Township for determination. The preservation of natural features and landscaping is also a criterion for subdivision review (see Part 6, Section 615).

#### 4. Protection of Plant Materials

- a. The interior dimensions, specifications, and design of any planting area or planting median proposed shall be sufficient to protect the landscaping materials planted therein to provide for proper growth.
- b. In locations where plants will be susceptible to injury by pedestrian or motor traffic, they shall be protected by appropriate curbs, tree guards, or other devices.
- c. Where trees of a diameter of eighteen (18) inches or more are required to be retained pursuant to Section 1504.D.3, above, the developer shall establish a Township-acceptable barrier around retained trees or tree stands during construction.

#### 5. Designing for Safety

In no case shall landscaping be approved which would inhibit or make more difficult the use of emergency vehicles, and all approved landscaping plans shall give consideration to safety precautions which will protect the vehicular and pedestrian public which may use the parking lot. In reviewing this aspect of the landscape plan, adequate provision for snow storage shall be considered by the Township.

#### 6. Energy Conservation

Plant material placement should be designed to reduce the energy consumption needs of the development as follows:

- a. Deciduous trees should be placed on the south and west sides of buildings to provide shade from the summer sun.
- b. Evergreens and other plant materials should be concentrated on the north side of buildings to dissipate the effect of winter winds.

#### 7. Detention/Retention Basins and Ponds

Detention/retention basins and ponds shall be landscaped. Such landscaping should include shade and ornamental trees, evergreens, shrubbery, hedges, groundcover, and/or other plant materials.

### **SECTION 1505. PARKING LOT LANDSCAPING**

#### A. Intent

Parking lot landscaping required by this Section is intended to promote attractive, safe off-street parking lots by providing minimum requirements for installation and maintenance of landscaped areas while placing a high priority on the safe flow of pedestrians and vehicles within a parking lot. A "parking lot," as used in this Section, is defined to include all of the area set aside for the accommodation of vehicle parking pursuant to the requirements of this Section, including the access drives, lanes, and drive-through areas located on the property in question.

#### B. Non-Conforming Parking Lots and/or Parking Lot Landscaping

Where a parking lot and/or any parking lot landscaping legally existed as of the effective date of this Chapter, and does not conform with the provisions of this Chapter, such parking lots and/or parking lot landscaping shall be considered legally non-conforming. Upon any expansion of a non-conforming parking lot, the entire parking lot, both the existing and expanded portion, shall be subject to the requirements of this Section.

## C. Perimeter Parking Lot Landscaping

### 1. Area and Configuration

- a. A landscaped area at least eight (8) feet in width shall be provided around the full perimeter of the parking lot, and according to TABLE 15.1 below.
- b. A street tree located within an adjacent right-of-way shall be counted in the determination of tree requirements within a given lineal border. It is not the intent of this Part to generate a double row of trees resulting from implementation of this Part together with the existing trees within the street right-of-way.
- c. These requirements may be altered by the Township to protect vehicular or pedestrian traffic, to facilitate free movement of emergency vehicles, or when sight lines into parking lots would be obscured by existing vegetation or existing or proposed structures.

### 2. Landscaping Material

- a. All ground between any street right-of-way and any parking lot shall be landscaped.
- b. Perimeter landscaping for parking lots shall meet and may exceed the minimum requirements indicated in Table 15.1, below.
- c. No more than seventy percent (70%) of the length of a perimeter parking lot landscaping area in a rear or side yard may be utilized for placement of a berm or a solid fence or wall of wood or masonry construction, as described in Section 1507 of this Part, below. The remaining percentage shall be landscaped according to Table 15.1, below.

TABLE 15.1 Required Perimeter Parking Lot Landscaping

	Front Yards	Rear and Side Yards	
		Abutting or Across from Residential Use	Abutting or Across from Non-Residential Use
Shade Trees	One tree per fifty (50) feet of yard length	One tree per thirty (30) feet of yard length	One tree per fifty (50) feet of yard length
Shrubs	One shrub, measuring a minimum of 24" at planting and not to exceed four (4) feet at maturity, per five (5) feet of yard length, clustered, spaced linearly, or staggered across 100% of the parking lot length.	One shrub, measuring a minimum of 24" at planting and not to exceed four (4) feet at maturity, per three (3) feet of yard length, spaced linearly, or staggered across 100% of the parking lot length.	One shrub, measuring a minimum of 24" at planting and not to exceed four (4) feet at maturity, per five (5) feet of yard length, clustered, spaced linearly, or staggered across 50% of the parking lot length.

Groundcover	Landscape areas outside of shrub and tree plantings shall be planted in turf or other approved groundcover.
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#### D. Interior Parking Lot Landscaping

##### 1. Area Required

At least five percent (5%) of the gross vehicular area of the parking lot shall be landscaped. Perimeter parking lot landscaping, as required below, shall not be included toward satisfying this requirement.

##### 2. Planting Islands

- a. Planting islands shall be a minimum of one hundred twenty (120) square feet in area and shall be a minimum of seven (7) feet in width, as measured from back of curb to back of curb.
- b. Interior landscaped areas shall be dispersed so as to define aisles and limit unbroken rows of parking to one hundred fifty (150) feet.
- c. If the specific application of interior landscaping requirements will seriously limit functions of the building site, the Township may permit consolidation and relocation of these landscaped areas on the building site.

##### 3. Landscaping Material

The plant material used to improve the planting islands defined above shall conform to the following:

- a. The primary landscaping materials used in parking lots shall be shade tree species in conformance with applicable provisions of section 1504.A.1, above. Ornamental trees, shrubbery, hedges, and other plant materials may be used to supplement the shade tree plantings, but shall not be the sole contribution to such landscaping.
- b. One (1) shade tree shall be provided for every one hundred twenty (120) square feet of landscaping area.
- c. One hundred percent (100%) of every interior parking lot landscaping area shall be planted with an approved groundcover in the appropriate density to achieve complete cover within two (2) year, or a combination of decorative rock, mulch, grass, and/or dense ground cover. No bare dirt or site exposed earth or rock shall show.

#### E. Parking Garages

Parking structures shall provide, along any street frontage, pedestrian-related amenities such as sitting areas, planters, and visually interesting wall surfaces at the street level. Such amenities shall be evaluated through Site Plan Review.

### **SECTION 1506. LANDSCAPE BUFFERS BETWEEN INCOMPATIBLE USES**

## A. General Restrictions

Landscape buffers shall be reserved for the planting of materials and installation of fencing as required within this Section. No parking, driveways, sidewalks, accessory buildings, or other impervious surfaces shall be permitted, unless specifically authorized through the site plan review process. Landscape buffers may be located within required yards as established in the applicable district regulations. Where both landscape buffers and parking lot landscaping are required, the more restrictive which results in the widest buffer, shall apply. Where natural topography or existing vegetation serves buffering purposes, the Township may waive some or all of the buffering requirements below.

## B. Size and Improvement of Landscape Buffers

The size and improvement of landscape buffers between various uses shall be as indicated below. Areas within the landscape buffer that are not planted with trees or shrubs shall be maintained in grass or other acceptable groundcover. Buffer screening shall not be required along the front yard line of a commercial or industrial use which fronts on a public road and which is directly across from a residential district or use. Decorative landscaping only will be required as determined through Site Plan review. Buffer screenings will normally be required to run along the entire length of the line of the abutting property unless a condition exists that may reasonable allow for a lesser length of buffer screening, such as topography or vegetation which will accomplish the screening intent of this Part 15 Ordinance. Such relief may be approved through the Site Plan Review process where the intent of the buffering of an adjacent residential dwelling is maintained.

### 1. C-1 District

Where a lot in a C-1 district abuts a residential district or use, a landscape buffer twenty-five (25) feet in width shall be provided within the required setback distance. Within the buffer, the following improvements shall be provided along the entire length of the buffer:

- a. A tree screen, consisting of two staggered rows of 30% deciduous, 70% evergreen trees, with individual trees to be at least six (6) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than twelve (12) feet apart.
- b. Shrubs of a non-deciduous species, planted in staggered rows, with individual shrubs to be at least two (2) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than five (5) feet apart.

### 2. C-2 District

Where a lot in a C-2 district abuts a residential district or use, a landscape buffer twenty (20) feet in width shall be provided within the required setback distance. Within the buffer, the following improvements shall be provided along the entire length of the buffer:

- a. A tree screen, consisting of 30% deciduous and 70% evergreen trees, with individual trees to be at least six (6) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than twelve (12) feet apart.
- b. Shrubs of a non-deciduous species, planted in staggered rows, with individual shrubs to be at least two (2) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than five (5) feet apart.

### 3. C-3 District

Where a lot in a C-3 district abuts a residential district or use, a landscape buffer eight (8) feet in width shall be provided within the required setback distance. Within the buffer, the following improvements shall be provided along the entire length of the buffer:

- a. A tree screen, consisting of 30% deciduous and 70% evergreen trees, with individual trees to be at least six (6) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than twelve (12) feet apart.
- b. A continuous evergreen or dense deciduous shrub hedge, subject to Section 1504.A.2, shall be planted.

#### 4. All C Districts

Landscaping buffers shall not be required along the lot line where a lot in a Commercial district abuts a Residential district on which exists a legal Commercial use. Decorative landscaping only will be required.

#### 5. I-1 and I-2 Districts

Where a lot in an I-1 or I-2 district abuts a residential district or use, a landscape buffer forty (40) feet in width shall be provided within the required setback distance. Within the buffer, the following improvements shall be provided along the entire length of the buffer:

- a. A tree screen, consisting of three (3) staggered rows of 30% deciduous, 70% evergreen trees, with individual trees to be at least eight (8) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than twelve (12) feet apart.
- b. A continuous evergreen or dense deciduous shrub hedge, subject to Section 1504.A.2, shall be planted.
- c. Landscaping buffers per a. and b. above shall not be required along the lot line where a lot in an Industrial district abuts a Residential district on which exists a legal Commercial or Industrial use. In such cases, landscaping buffers shall be determined on a case by case basis through the Site Plan review process.

#### 6. SD and BPD Districts

Where a commercial or industrial lot in an SD or BPD district abuts a residential district or use, or a commercial or industrial lot in an SD district abuts a residential lot within an SD district, a landscape buffer thirty-five (35) feet in width shall be provided within the required setback distance. Within the buffer, the following improvements shall be provided along the entire length of the buffer:

- a. A tree screen, consisting of three(3) staggered rows of 30% deciduous, 70% evergreen trees, with individual trees to be at least six (6) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than twelve (12) feet apart.
- b. Shrubs of a non-deciduous species, planted in staggered rows, with individual shrubs to be at least two (2) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than five (5) feet apart.

#### 7. Multi-Family or Mobile Home Developments



Where a multi-family or mobile home development abuts an R-1 district or single-family use, a landscape buffer twenty (20) feet in width shall be provided within the required setback distance. Within the buffer, the following improvements shall be provided along the entire length of the buffer:

- a. A tree screen, consisting of 30% deciduous and 70% evergreen trees, with individual trees to be at least six (6) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than twelve (12) feet apart.
- b. Shrubs of a non-deciduous species, planted in staggered rows, with individual shrubs to be at least two (2) feet in height at planting and spaced no more than five (5) feet apart.

#### 8. Uses Within the Same District

When commercial, industrial, or multi-family uses are proposed adjacent to farms, single-family, or two-family uses within the same zoning district, the extent of the required landscaping buffer shall be determined by the Township through site plan review.

### **SECTION 1507. SCREENING**

#### A. Non-Vegetative Screening as Part of Perimeter Parking Lot Landscaping or Landscape Buffers

Screening by a berm, fence, or wall may supplement or replace portions of the required linear length of perimeter parking lot landscaping and/or landscape buffers as required by this Part. Where permitted through the Site Plan Review process, such screening shall be permitted pursuant to the following:

1. Screening materials shall be at least three (3) feet high, but may not exceed six (6) feet in height without the consent of the contiguous property owner, which shall be obtained in writing and filed in the office of the Director of Planning. In no case shall screening exceed seven (7) feet in height.
2. A berm shall not exceed a slope of thirty (30) degrees and shall be completely covered with shrubs, grass, or other living ground cover.
3. Fences or walls used as screening shall be solid and opaque and constructed of wood or masonry. In order to break the monotony of a wood or masonry fence, at least one (1) shrub or vine shall be planted abutting the wall for every ten (10) feet of wall length, but not necessarily evenly spaced ten (10) feet apart. The required shrubs shall be installed outside of the fence, and the fence shall be erected a minimum of four (4) feet inside the property line to allow for the planting and maintenance of the shrubs.
4. In lieu of the vine or shrubbery requirements above, the Township may authorize and approve a masonry wall having a significant design variation evenly spaced at intervals of not more than twenty (20) feet.

#### B. Screening of Refuse Disposal Dumpsters

All refuse disposal dumpsters shall be screened on at least three sides by a solid wood or masonry fence, or evergreen trees, to a height of not less than six (6) feet but not more than eight (8) feet, in a manner in which the refuse disposal dumpster is completely screened from view from any road right-of-way or any residential use or district. This requirement shall also apply to recycling containers.

### C. Screening of Outdoor Storage Areas and Service Yards

All service yards, storage yards, and storage areas in commercial and industrial districts shall be screened by a solid wood or masonry fence, or a continuous evergreen screen, to a height of not less than six (6) feet but not more than eight (8) feet in a manner in which the service area or storage area is completely screened from view from any road right-of-way or any residential use or district. Screening shall be equally effective at all times of the year. No outdoor storage of any type shall, at any time, be located within any required setback area, or exceed the height of the screening required by this subsection. Outdoor storage yards, storage areas, and service yards unable to meet the screening requirements are prohibited.

### **SECTION 1508. PERFORMANCE AND MAINTENANCE BONDS (Section 906.1.A.4, Zoning)**

Where landscaping is required to be installed pursuant to this Part, a performance bond or other financial security shall be submitted in the amount of one hundred percent (100%) of the cost of the required landscaping. Such financial security shall be posted with the Township as a prerequisite to obtaining permits for development of a site and shall be required for a period of one (1) year from the date of issuance of such permits. Upon completion of the landscaping improvements and inspection by the Township, the financial security shall be released. The Township may require the posting of a maintenance bond or other financial security in the amount of five percent (5%) of the total cost of landscaping improvements, or a minimum of five hundred dollars (\$500), whichever is greater, to guarantee the replacement of landscaping material, if necessary, for a period of two (2) years from the date of release of the performance security. Release of landscaping escrows and bonds does not relieve the Owner of perpetual maintenance of buffers, screenings, and landscaping.

### **SECTION 1509. INSPECTION**

The Zoning Officer, or a duly appointed representative, shall have the authority to visit any site and enter property to inspect the landscaping in order to ensure compliance with an approved landscaping or site plan.

### **SECTION 1510. CHANGES TO APPROVED LANDSCAPING PLANS**

Any change or deviation to an approved landscaping plan shall require the approval of the Township.. Changes that do not conform to this Part shall be subject to the procedures for a variance as established in Part 4, Section 404 of this Chapter. Landscaping improvements made on a site that are not in conformance with the approved landscaping or site plan shall be considered a violation of this Chapter subject to the fines and penalties established herein, provided, however, that landscaping improvements may exceed the minimum requirements as shown on the approved plan.